

Blue Water Bridge Project Separation – Details and Explanation

Details of the Separation

- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be completed for the Blue Water Bridge Plaza study that will focus on plaza improvements and local access to the plaza.
- An Environmental Assessment (EA) will be completed that will address roadway improvements including I-69/94 ramps to and from the existing plaza, the Black River Bridge, the Water Street Interchange, and a new MDOT welcome center.
- Improvements discussed in the EA will be necessary regardless of what alternative is selected for plaza improvements even if nothing is done to the existing plaza.
- The study area for the EA is located along I-69/94 and the M-25 Connector. The northern terminus is M-25 Connector/Hancock and the southern terminus is I-69/94 bridge over Lapeer Road.
- The estimated completion time for the EA is one year.

Reasons for the Separation of the Blue Water Bridge Plaza Study

- Upon completion of the preliminary draft EIS concerns raised by Customs and Border Protection required the reevaluation of alternatives as well as the addition of a new alternative.
- The existing condition of the Black River Bridge requires that it be rehabilitated/replaced within the next several years. MDOT no longer can afford to wait for all of the plaza design/layout issues to be resolved.
- To continue to move independent and critical portions of the project forward while a new alternative is being drafted and evaluated.
- The EA will include roadway improvements and the construction of a new welcome center that can be accelerated apart from the construction of the alternative chosen for the plaza; this will allow portions of the project to move forward more quickly.

Differences between an Environmental Assessment (EA) and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

- An EA is a concise public document analyzing the potential environmental impacts of a project. It briefly provides sufficient evidence and analysis of alternatives and their environmental impacts.

- An EIS is more detailed and comprehensive than an EA and is prepared for projects with potentially significant environmental impacts.
- An EIS is a detailed written document that provides the public, Federal, State and Local government agencies with detailed information about a proposed Federal Action. An EIS provides detailed discussion of environmental impacts and informs decision makers and the public of reasonable alternatives that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts and/or enhance quality of life. An EIS examines significant impacts and provides analysis for mitigation of these impacts.
- Completion of an EIS study includes both a draft EIS (DEIS) and final EIS (FEIS). A public hearing is held following release of the DEIS. Following the review period for the FEIS, a Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed that completes the study.
- If at the completion of the EA no significant environmental impacts are found, a Finding of No Significant Impacts (FONSI) will be prepared. There is not a draft and final EA. A FONSI ends the EA environmental analysis process, provides reasoning why an EIS is not required and responds to all comments on the EA.
- A 30 day comment period will be provided upon the completion of the EA and includes a public hearing.
- Typical completion time for an EA is 12 - 24 months.
- Typical completion time for an EIS is 3-5 years.